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Training Staff Officers to the Level of Modern Requirements

by
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An article by General-Mayor S. Bashuk and Colonel M. Fedulov was published under the above title in the Collection of Articles of the Journal "Military Thought" No. 1 (83) for 1968. We are completely certain that all staff officers, first and foremost operations officers, are in full agreement with the authors, who have demonstrated convincingly enough the need to take very serious measures for further increasing the role and importance of staffs as organs of control.

Our manuals and regulations clearly define the leadership role, duties, and authority of staffs in a modern operation and battle. Moreover, the requirements placed upon staffs are continually reflected in the orders and directives of the Minister of Defense and in the daily activity of the troops which is directed toward raising the level of combat training and combat readiness.

It is well known that without a well coordinated and trained staff, it is impossible to carry out tasks successfully in peacetime and particularly in a combat situation.

Unfortunately, however, based on personal experience, we are daily persuaded that staffs are not always capable of fulfilling their functions to the utmost extent. This is explained by the fact that the demands made on control organs are constantly increasing and the volume of work is expanding, while their organizational structure and the level and methods of their training have not changed at all. The resulting contradiction leads objectively to a reduction in the organizing role of staffs, particularly at the corps-division level.

The following situation draws attention. The Staff Field Service Manual, for example, indicates the specific duties of the operations department (section) in wartime, but for peacetime the duties of this department are virtually undefined. In order to understand the work volume of the operations department (section), it is necessary to project, if only in broad outline,

those tasks which the staff must carry out under peacetime conditions. It seems to us that even a simple listing of them will suffice.

At the minimum, the operations department (section) is responsible for:

- working out and constantly refining matters of combat readiness and mobilization readiness;
- planning combat and political training (working out and monitoring the implementation of plans and preparing all types of graphics, methods instructions, training schedules, programs, etc.);
- working out, preparing, and participating in the yearly conducting of three to four command-staff exercises, one or two two-level command-staff war games, three to four tactical exercises, one to two tactical demonstration exercises and three to five demonstration drills, and also working out and preparing materials for conducting critiques;
- working out and preparing monthly planning documents for the coming month, staff training sessions, and one to two group training periods (short exercises) for officer training groups;
- working out accountings, reports, weekly operations summaries, and other records documents;
- keeping a record of combat and officer training;
- planning military science work, preparing one to two military science meetings (conferences), and working out at least one to two reports on military science work during the year;
- organizing and monitoring troop duty (guard duty and garrison duty), working out monitoring plans, duty schedules, accountings, and reports;

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- working out orders and instructions on matters of combat readiness, combat training, and troop duty;
- organizing the training of reserve officers and courses of instruction for those registered;
- working out plans for improving the training materiel resources and keeping a record of and reporting on the materials and means issued for combat training. Keeping a record of and distributing training literature, supplies, and training films;
- organizing the headquarters duty and security.

This is far from a complete listing of the tasks for which the operations department (section) is responsible; to it must also be added a number of other measures for which officers are allocated: two days per month -- officer training; one day -- a staff training session; one to two days -- headquarters duty; a minimum of two to three days -- work within units; and also preparation of all types of courses of instruction and coordination of questions with the chiefs of the branch arms, sections, and services. As a result, each operations officer must spend on the average about 80 to 90 hours a month on all of this, i.e., about 50 percent of the monthly time budget assuming a seven-hour working day.

It is not difficult to be persuaded that operations officers are systematically overloaded in carrying out this entire volume of work, which in turn affects the quality of the work. It is obviously necessary to review their duties, and perhaps their tables of organization as well.

The question of the authorized ranks and the pay rates of operations personnel must also be settled. In a tank division, for example, the rank of the assistant chief of the operations section is captain and that of the senior assistant is major, and their pay is equal respectively to the pay of a tank company commander and a battalion chief of staff. So it is thus not surprising that officers at the regiment and even battalion level sometimes do not wish, in view of the aforementioned disparities, to be assigned (for purposes of promotion) to a key section of a

staff. As a result, a situation is created in which the manning of an operations section with trained officers with high potential becomes a difficult problem to solve. Consequently, all of this has a negative effect on the training of operations officers and on staff organizational work.

How, then, can we raise the level of training of operations officers and staff officers? Unfortunately the authors of the article under review are actually proposing only half-measures. After all, courses at academies are not the best way out of the situation, if only for the reason that with the existing tables of organization, the departure of even one operations officer on regular leave is immediately reflected adversely in the work. And an officer would be attending the courses for an entire year.

Officer training exercises and staff training sessions are unquestionably very important. But even with their help, the goal of training operations officers is far from being completely attained. The point is that, as an example, in the staff of a division these exercises are prepared by the operations section, i.e., by the very same operations officers. As regards their studying independently, it must be stated bluntly that with the existing work load, it will in no way be possible to allot enough time for it. Operations officers are of course studying independently, but this leads to their being even more overworked.

In our opinion, in order to properly resolve the questions involved in training operations officers, it is necessary first and foremost to consider their combat assignment, i.e., to put the main emphasis on training for reliable troop control during the preparation for and conduct of a battle.

In resolving all of these questions from the standpoint of the requirements of present-day conditions, we would consider it necessary to take the following basic measures.

1. In the military academies, set up training groups for training staff officers, since this is actually not being done in a single educational institution. Incidentally, experience confirms this need, considering that work in a staff today demands a great deal of special knowledge and skills. And the more time goes by, the greater will be the volume of these

demands.

2. In the headquarters of divisions, set up sections for combat training, as is done in the headquarters of an army corps and above. This will permit operations officers to concentrate their attention on combat readiness and operational-tactical training.

3. Bring the organizational structure of staffs, the authorized ranks, and the pay of officers into conformity with the volume, importance, and responsibility of their work under modern conditions.

We would like to point out that in divisions of reduced strength it is advisable to have the same operations section as in full divisions, since the organizational structure of a large unit by no means determines the overall volume of work of the control organs. Moreover, bringing an operations section to full strength with registered reserve officers during the period of deployment would weaken the key section at the most crucial time.

4. Work out a special Regulation by which to define the duties and authority of staff departments and sections, including the operations section (department), in peacetime, so that their subordination and the volume of tasks they are to carry out will be regulated by a well-defined framework.

It is also necessary to definitively establish some maximum in working out all types of accountings and reports and submitting them to the higher staffs and to reduce the number of records, documents and other documents to be worked out by staffs.

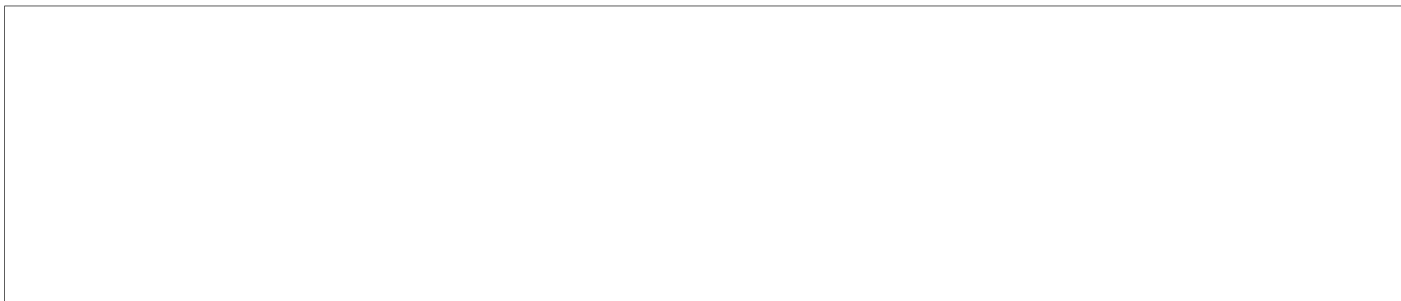
5. Reorganize the officer training of staff officers according to the principle "senior staffs instruct subordinate staffs". The division chief of staff must instruct operations officers and regimental chiefs of staff, the division intelligence (communications) chief -- his own direct subordinates and the regimental intelligence (communications) chiefs, and the regimental chief of staff -- his own deputy^{50X1-HUM} (assistant) and the battalion staffs. At the present time, however, the division (regiment) chief of staff actually learns control as a whole, which cannot be considered an adequately



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sound approach. In connection with this it obviously is advisable to work out programs of officer training for staff officers and indeed for all other categories of officer personnel as well.

The implementation of these measures, in our view, would unquestionably contribute to a real increase in the role and importance of staffs at all levels both in peacetime and in wartime.



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